



Common Hospice Myths

Hospice is often misunderstood. Sometimes it's even misunderstood by experts. It is obvious that if even the medical community does not fully understand some facts about hospice, then the public certainly might not know the facts.

Several points come to mind. Perhaps we could call these "Hospice Myths". You know a myth is some mythical story or belief that may not be true. Well, some hospice myths really need to be put to rest.

Myth: *Hospice is a place.* Most patients and families believe when they hear about hospice care they think they have to go somewhere to receive that care. In fact, not myth, some hospice organizations do have a hospice house. A place or a unit where patients with incurable disease can go to receive care. But that's not the norm. The norm is that hospice is a service, not a place, and hospice will come to the patient, their home, their nursing home, their assisted living. We even have a patient who is homeless and lets us know where to meet him to provide the care he requires.

Myth: *Patients will die immediately when hospice care begins.* This is commonly held as a fact but indeed it is a myth, not based on truth at all. Medicare provides the guidance here. Patients who doctors believe can live up to six months have the opportunity to enroll in hospice and take advantage of hospice care for many weeks, even many months. Now it is true that some patients come to hospice very, very late in their disease and they may live only a short time. Often we hear from these patients and their families "if only we had known about hospice earlier we would have signed up".

Myth: *Hospice patients have to give up their own doctor.* Hospice invites family doctors, personal doctors, to continue care of their patients when that patient is enrolled in hospice. Some of the better hospice organizations do have doctors that can make patient visits. But they never interfere with the private doctor and patient relationship.

Myth: *Hospice is only for cancer patients.* Well, this is not exactly a myth. In the very beginning of hospice most patients were cancer patients. But, over time patients with other diseases- Diabetes, heart disease, stroke, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's realized that there was a great benefit from hospice care. Now days there are more non-cancer patients enrolled in hospice than there are cancer patients.

Myth: *Hospice is too expensive for most families.* Hospice is a Medicare benefit. That means that Congress has passed laws that say that people who are on Social Security or are receiving Medicare can have hospice care. It is a 100% benefit; anything related to the terminal diagnosis is paid for the Medicare. Many private insurances also have a hospice benefit and for folks younger than Medicare age they may want to check their health insurance plan to see if there is a hospice benefit.

Myth: *All Hospice organizations are the same.* Although all hospice programs are governed by the same Medicare rules and regulations, Hospices are anything but the same. Covenant Care is considered one of the largest and most comprehensive hospices in the nation.